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10 March 1980

## TALKING POINTS FOR THE DCI

SUBJECT: Net Assessments and NIE 11-3/8-79

REFERENCES: (a) DCI Letter to SecDef dated 26 February 1980  
(b) SecDef Letter to DCI dated 7 March 1980

1. Basic principle: NIEs should be void of policy and force planning recommendations; in interest of objectivity should be free from policy influence.

a. NIEs specifically NIE 11-3/8-79 contains no such policy recommendations.

b. DCI relies heavily on assessments and judgments of Central Intelligence Agency, which has no departmental subordination. Interagency production process for NIEs however, allows and encourages surfacing of assessments and judgments by departmental intelligence agencies.

c. Do not solicit approval of policy officials on the substantive judgments in an NIE before issuance. At times, seek comment on whether an NIE in scope and detail responds to their needs and as appropriate verify the validity and authoritativeness of any US data used in the process of preparing the NIE.

## 2. "Net Assessments" in National Intelligence

a. Intelligence estimating inherently involves net assessment.  
For example

(1) Forecasts derived from analysis of the interaction of policies and forces of several nations including the US.

(2) Characteristics of individual Soviet weapons systems derived from technical analyses of their likely performance against US weapons.

b. Intelligence estimates on Soviet strategic capabilities

(1) Require some interaction analysis involving both Soviet and US weapons systems and forces--implicitly or explicitly--to understand Soviet developments and to make forecasts about them.

(2) Since the early 1970s, policymakers have demanded that NIEs be explicit about the analytical basis for findings and projections.

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(3) For consumers to gauge the threat the size and capabilities of Soviet forces must be depicted in relation to trends in US forces.

3. Analytical Techniques Used in NIE 11-3/8 Series. Agree with Secretary of Defense, there is no single measure which adequately depicts the Soviet threat or the strategic balance. The NIEs contain a number of measures to depict trends in Soviet forces and in some cases, in comparison with trends in US forces (or Chinese or NATO or other depending on the issue):

a. Static indicators and comparisons

(1) Qualitative factors: accuracy, reliability, yield and hardness of weapons

(2) Quantitative indicators of the aggregate size and characteristics of total forces

- Delivery vehicles
- Missile and bomber weapons
- Equivalent megatons
- Hard target capable ICBM RVs
- Relatively survivable missile RVs
- Hard target potential
- Lethal area potential

(3) Static measures assist in depicting the relative size and composition of arsenals of the two sides, but inadequate to portray key aspects of Soviet capabilities.

b. Quasi-dynamic indicators

(1) Static indicators have been combined into rough measures of the aggregate potential of the two sides to perform two types of missions after a counterforce first strike by one side against the other:

attacks against soft area targets, "Lethal Area Potential" and attacks against hardened targets "Hard Target Potential." These measures adjust for asymmetries in the size and qualitative characteristics of the forces of the two sides.

(2) Calculations of these measures do not involve assumptions about Soviet and US tactics or other operational factors.

(3) They do give some feeling for important capabilities, vulnerabilities, asymmetries and therefore the options available to planners on each side.

(4) These indicators are not represented as the only or necessarily the best measures of the Soviet threat. They are important to those who focus on retaliatory potential as the key index.

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c. Dynamic Indicators of the likely outcome of a nuclear exchange.

(1) These calculations extend the quasi-dynamic analysis of the aggregate potential of the forces to perform nominal missions, to the capabilities of the forces to achieve mission objectives against actual targets, considering tactics, execution capabilities and other operational factors. The DoD has conducted this type of analysis of the warfighting potential of the strategic forces of two sides.

(2) Dynamic measures important to those who focus on the outcome of a nuclear exchange as the key index.

(3) In view of your concern that the JCS/SAGA dynamic analysis not be given more visibility than it deserves, all references to it are being deleted from the draft NIE.

4. DCI Position on the Net Assessments (Exchange Calculations) in NIEs.

a. Do not accept the position that net assessments per se or that some particular form of net assessment (interaction analysis or exchange calculations) which is helpful in illuminating the threat is beyond the charter of national intelligence.

b. Analytical responsibilities of departmental intelligence agencies assigned according to a division of staff functions which the department finds most suitable to its needs. No reason CIA analysis or content of NIEs should necessarily be governed by limitations placed on functions of DoD intelligence agencies.

c. Agree that we should work hard on trying to replicate methods used by the Soviets to calculate the strategic balance for presentation in the NIE.

d. There are, however, practical and bureaucratic limits on the type of interaction analyses intelligence should undertake. We cannot by ourselves effectively conduct

(1) Assessments to evaluate US employment options or alternative tactics and strategy

(2) Assessments which take into account the full range of Soviet and US options for war initiation and prosecution as well as the many operational factors involved.

e. In NIE 11-3/8 as in other estimates, I believe it is my right and duty to help consumers understand why we make certain judgments and the implications of projected trends. This applies as well to estimates of

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Soviet scientific and technical capabilities, economic prospects, general purpose forces, (e.g., Warsaw Pact capabilities versus NATO), just as it does to assessments of, for example, the Arab-Israeli military balance. The only difference is that in some cases the Soviet adversary is the US.

f. If I were to delete the quasi-dynamic analyses we would have to revert to static indicators to support our findings and projections.

5. National Net Assessments of the US-USSR Strategic Balance.

a. I and three of my predecessors, and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence have recommended national level net assessments, possibly conducted under the aegis of NSC Staff.

b. I have cooperated with Chairman JCS initiatives toward this goal by providing for Intelligence Community participation in JCS/SAGA net assessment. The initial SAGA net assessment addressed only a full scale nuclear exchange; is a single input to a national net assessment that remains to be done.

6. US No-SALT Forces in NIE 11-3/8-79

a. US deferral of SALT II increases concerns about Soviet threat without Treaty limits.

b. A No-SALT US force for comparison with our projection of Soviet No-SALT forces will be conspicuously absent from the NIE.

c. In view of your warning that there is as yet no authoritative US No-SALT force we are deleting all the graphics depicting such a force from NIE 11-3/8-79.

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DCI LETTERHEAD

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Third D R A F T  
10 March 1980

Dear Harold:

25X1 This is in reply to your letter of March 7, 1980, in which you say you cannot accept the inclusion of US-Soviet force exchange calculations and postulated US No-SALT forces in the draft national intelligence estimate on Soviet strategic forces. ☐

25X1 I share fully your view that the intelligence and policymaking functions are separate and distinct, and of course I agree that an intelligence estimate must not be a vehicle for making recommendations concerning US policy. I also understand fully that your comments on certain aspects of the draft NIE, which you reviewed at my request, do not question either the independence of the intelligence community or its need to understand US forces and options in order to carry out its mission. ☐

The primary mission of the intelligence estimate on Soviet strategic forces is to analyze and forecast Soviet capabilities and policies, and to depict the threat they pose. An analysis and forecast of Soviet strategic programs would be sterile if they were described without reference to the programs of the USSR's principal adversary, i.e., the US, as would a discussion of Soviet policies, problems, and options. The key issue is how far it is legitimate and practical for intelligence to go with US counterpart data, and whether such data should be provided only as comparative benchmarks or also to demonstrate conclusions about Soviet capabilities and options. ☐

As you know, for some years intelligence has without objection illustrated trends in Soviet strategic forces by static comparisons with US forces. However,

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it is widely and I believe correctly perceived in both DoD and CIA, that in this era of rough strategic equality when qualitative factors are of overriding importance to actual capabilities, the traditional static indicators are inadequate to portray key aspects of Soviet capabilities. Thus for some years we have, again without objection, illustrated certain of our major conclusions by such limited calculations as those demonstrating the hypothetical Soviet ICBM threat to US silos and, conversely, the survivability of Soviet silos if subjected to a hypothetical US ICBM strike. In the past three years, as intelligence consumers have come to a good understanding of the issue of silo survivability, we have moved to somewhat more comprehensive, but still very limited, calculations of the residual force potentials which would be available to each side after hypothetical counter-force strikes. The purpose of these calculations is to put into broader perspective some of the qualitative attributes and asymmetries which affect Soviet and US capabilities and options, to illustrate trends, and to display them in a manner most relevant to deterrence in its most elementary form--that is, assured destruction. I cannot agree that there is valid objection to this type of illustration, especially when its limited utility and purpose is spelled out carefully in the draft NIE.

I do not intend or desire that intelligence, by itself, go as far as undertaking strategic net assessments involving such considerations as US targeting doctrine and operational factors. As you know, I welcomed the opportunity for intelligence to participate along with DoD in the JCS/SAGA

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analysis of two-sided exchanges, in which some effort was made to incorporate such factors. In my view, the JCS/SAGA analysis provides insight into a more complex perception of nuclear deterrence based on capabilities to carry out specified targeting objectives and to have substantial force potentials remaining. As you also know, I believe it would be in the national interest for the NSC to direct an even more comprehensive net assessment of US and Soviet strategic capabilities, including wargaming, in which both DoD and intelligence would participate.

In intelligence estimates, however, I continue to believe it is my right and duty to include carefully caveated interaction analyses, such as the calculation of residual force potentials, where they will help Executive and Legislative consumers to grasp why we make certain predictions about what the Soviets may do in the future and what the trends mean. If foreclosed from using such techniques, the NIE would have to revert to using the inadequate static measures.

I appreciate your concern that the JCS/SAGA analysis not be accorded more status than is presently warranted, and I note that you are planning to circulate it and the PA&E analysis with appropriate caveats. I have therefore decided to delete reference to the JCS/SAGA analysis in the NIE. Also, while the US No-SALT force postulated in the draft NIE appears reasonable on the basis of staff-level consultation with OSD, I have decided to delete it because of your warning that there is at present no authoritative US No-SALT projection. I plan instead to compare prospective Soviet No-SALT forces with the forces we could expect the USSR to acquire under SALT

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limitations, and to describe briefly in words the implications of the greater flexibility the Soviets would have in No-SALT circumstances. ☐

I hope this expression of my views, and my decision to remove the JCS/SAGA analysis and the postulated US No-SALT force from the NIE, meet the concerns expressed in your letter and make it possible for you to accept the draft as amended. If this is not the case, please let me know so that we can together discuss the issue with the President. ☐

Yours,

STANSFIELD TURNER

The Honorable Harold Brown  
Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon

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